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From: Shore, Berry
Sent: Fri 7/22/2016 2:21:17 PM
Subject: Newburgh/Hoosick Falls POFS/POFA Clips

Newburgh asks state to conduct blood sampling for chemical in water supply

By Scott Waldman

07/22/16 06:05 AM EDT

ALBANY — Thousands of Newburgh residents may have been exposed to a toxic chemical linked to cancer in their water supply but it's unclear if the state plans to conduct blood tests.

So the city is trying to give the state a nudge. City manager Michael Ciaravino recently wrote to the state Department of Health requesting that Newburgh residents be tested, and volunteering to offer testing sites.

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As with other sites where perfluorinated chemicals have been found in New York, it's unclear how long the toxic chemical has been in the water. Ciaravino noted that Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration collected blood samples in Hoosick Falls to determine exposure levels there, and said it was time to develop an "appropriate response" in Newburgh.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently set a guideline of 70 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water supplies. PFOS, or perfluorooctanesulfonic acid, is related to PFOA, or perfluorooctanoic acid, and has been linked to serious health problems in humans. It is used in firefighting foam, including the type used at the nearby Stewart Air National Guard Base.

"In light of the recent health advisory from EPA reducing the guidance limit for PFOS from 200 ppt to 70 ppt, and in light of the fact that the City has no way of knowing the duration of, and at what levels our residents have historically been exposed to PFOS in their drinking water, we believe there is adequate justification for the Department of Health to institute a biological testing program and health assessment study in the City

of Newburgh,” Ciaravino said.

Health department spokesman James Plastiras said the administration’s “top priority has always been to reduce exposure.”

“We will continue to take decisive action to support the City and its residents, and are actively engaged with federal partners, specifically the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, in working to find solutions that provide the tools the community needs to better understand possible exposure to PFOS,” he said in a statement.

In Hoosick Falls, hundreds of residents have elevated levels of PFOA, which takes years to leave the body, in their bloodstream. Some of the blood levels in Hoosick Falls and nearby Petersburg are more than 500 times the national average of 2 parts per billion.

Depending on the extent of the pollution in Newburgh, an even larger portion of the public could have been exposed to chemicals in their water supply.

It is essential to conduct bio-monitoring when large numbers of people are exposed to toxic chemicals, said Laurel Schaider, a research scientist at the Silent Spring Institute, which studies the links between environmental contamination and human health. She said it’s important for people to track their own exposure, and that of their children, so that they work with medical professionals to track any health issues. Early blood testing is essential, she said.

“I think it’s also helpful because it might put you on the lookout for certain types of health effects that may happen down the road,” Schaider said. “So, for instance, PFOS is thought to affect the liver, so down the road to have that as part of someone’s medical record may help their doctor diagnose or check for some problem of the liver”

The state Department of Environmental Conservation is investigating the cause of the pollution and has promised to hold any polluters responsible. The state is also paying

for a new water filter for Newburgh to remove PFOS as well as an upgrade in pipelines for an alternative water source from the Catskill aqueduct.

In May, Ciaravino declared a state of emergency and issued warnings about Newburgh's municipal water supply, which tested at more than 140 parts per trillion for PFOS. The declaration was lifted a day later, after the city switched its water supply to a different, temporary source. The city's mayor, Judy Kennedy, was angry about the declaration and said she had been in talks with the Cuomo administration and the EPA about how to handle the pollution crisis.

Congress is now conducting a probe of the way the Cuomo administration and the EPA handled the Hoosick Falls water crisis, calling it "sluggish." The Assembly will hold hearings in September on water quality issues around the state and the Senate is holding hearings next month in Hoosick Falls.

State finalizing design of new water filtration system for Newburgh

Updated Jul 21, 2016 at 1:33 PM

Recordonline.com

CITY OF NEWBURGH – The state-funded design of a new filtration system that will allow the City of Newburgh to resume drawing drinking water from contaminated Washington Lake is still underway, according to the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Last month DEC announced that it will pay for the design and installation of a granular activated carbon system at Newburgh's filtration plant on Route 207. The method has proven successful at removing perfluorinated chemicals, a class of compounds that have polluted public water supplies nationwide.

Washington Lake, long used as Newburgh's primary supply, has been closed since May 2 due to high levels of perfluorooctane sulfonate, or PFOS. Newburgh then drained its backup source, Brown's Pond, and is now buying water from New York City's Catskill Aqueduct.

The new system, which is being designed by Arcadis Engineering, is scheduled to be up and running by October 2017.

“The design of the granular activated carbon filtration system is currently underway,” said Sean Mahar, a spokesman for DEC.

“Once complete, a full cost estimate will be created for this multi-million dollar filtration system and additional infrastructure upgrades, including improved hookup to the Catskill Aqueduct and Brown’s Pond.”

Hoosick Falls-inspired law extends statute of limitations: Time for pollution-related claims now up to three years after Superfund designation

By Matthew Hamilton

Updated 9:47 pm, Thursday, July 21, 2016

Time Union

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday signed legislation spurred by the Hoosick Falls water contamination crisis that extends the statute of limitations for personal injury claims related to pollution at Superfund sites.

The legislation allows those adversely affected by exposure to chemicals or other substances to file claims up to three years after a site is designated as a state or federal Superfund site.

The Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics plant in Hoosick Falls, from which PFOA-contamination originated, was declared a Superfund site in January

Previous law required claims to be filed within three years of when an injury was discovered or when it should have been reasonably been discovered, a sometimes arbitrary and difficult date to pin down. In Hoosick Falls, the chemical PFOA was used at the Saint-Gobain plant for decades before contamination came into the public spotlight last year.

"Although Hoosick Falls inspired it, it actually, I think, establishes a very important precedent," Assembly sponsor John McDonald, D-Cohoes, said Thursday. "Yes, it's a win for the residents of Hoosick Falls, but (it's also a win) for residents around New York state who might have an unfortunate situation like Hoosick Falls."

Senate sponsor Kathy Marchione, R-Halfmoon, said the new law will allow the residents of Hoosick Falls, Petersburg — another eastern Rensselaer County town stricken with water contamination — and other parts of the state to have their day in court.

Jed Donovan, a 63-year-old town of Hoosick resident who in the 1990s lived in the village where the municipal water supply is contaminated, said he cried with happiness when news came that the legislation had been signed.

Donovan said he has ulcerative colitis, which is linked to PFOA exposure, and hopes to proceed with a personal injury claim with the new law on the books.

"I'm thrilled for the hundreds of people in Hoosick Falls who are sick and for our (nine) grandchildren because one day, one of them might be ill too," said Donovan.

Robin Greenwald, head of the Environmental and Consumer Protection Unit for the Manhattan personal injury law firm Weitz & Lunxenberg hailed the new law as renewing hope for residents "who until now were prevented from taking legal action against Honeywell and St. Gobain — the companies responsible for their suffering."

Greenwald's firm earlier this year filed a federal class action lawsuit against Saint-Gobain and Honeywell International on behalf of four Hoosick Falls residents who claim

they were exposed to hazardous chemicals used by the companies and that their property values have plummeted because of the contamination.

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Governor Signs Bill For Contamination Victims Into Law

By Lucas Willard

17 hours ago

WAMC – Northeast Public Radio

Governor Andrew Cuomo Thursday signed the bill, which would allow those with health effects associated with a federal or state superfund site to file a personal injury suit by suspending the statute of limitations for three years after such a designation.

The bill was designed to assist residents of Hoosick Falls, where the likely carcinogenic chemical PFOA was found in water supplies.

Albany area Assemblyman John McDonald spoke about the bill after its passage in June.

“The residents of Hoosick Falls and any other community that suffers through a similar plight should have a due process to follow and there should be a reasonable period of time,” said McDonald.

A Senate version of the bill was sponsored by Kathy Marchione.

Governor Cuomo Signs Hoosick Falls-Inspired Bill to Empower NYers Against Polluters

By Long Island News & PR Published:

July 22 2016

Long Island.com

Governor Cuomo signed into law a measure that will empower NYers exposed to contaminants from Superfund sites to file personal injury claims.

Albany, NY - July 21, 2016 - Today, Governor Cuomo signed into law a measure that will empower New Yorkers exposed to contaminants from Superfund sites to file personal injury claims against those polluters responsible. The bill that passed was in response to the water contamination crises in Hoosick Falls and Petersburg. Residents there only recently began to learn about the health impacts, such as rare cancers, and the existing statute of limitations law that would not allow for those who have been sick for over five years to seek justice.

Now, residents in any area designated a Superfund will have the legal avenue to pursue costs associated with their medical care.

The following statement is attributable to Liz Moran, water & natural resources associate for Environmental Advocates of New York:

“The signing of this bill into law is not only a huge moral and legal victory for Hoosick Falls and Petersburg residents, but an important step in holding polluters accountable. For too long, when crises like this occurred, residents were left reeling from the public health and economic consequences, while those responsible were allowed to slink away.

We thank all Hoosick Falls residents who fought for this bill to become law. They set aside personal fears so that others would not have to. We also applaud Assemblymember John McDonald (D-Cohoes) and Senator Kathy Marchione (R-Halfmoon) for shepherding this legislation to passage, as well as Governor Cuomo for quickly signing it into law.

What happened in Hoosick Falls, Petersburg and Newburgh isn't limited to those locations, nor is chemical contamination limited to PFOA. We call on the State Department of Health to take a page out the Vermont playbook and test all drinking water in the state for the presence of PFOA. We also look forward to working with legislators as hearings on developing a statewide action plan occur."

Hoosick Falls Mirrors Flint Water Crisis Scandal: Hoosick Falls Mirrors Flint Water Crisis Scandal

by Jason Tannahill

2016-07-21

In 2015, the Flint water crisis created serious health concerns in Michigan, while also creating a huge public relations scandal for Governor Rick Snyder. The public chastised Snyder for taking too long to act, while also accusing the governor of knowing all along the water supply was contaminated.

On the heels of such a crisis, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo finds himself facing similar backlash and accusations for the Hoosick Falls water crisis.

Congressional Committee Opens Inquiry

Not surprisingly, the Congressional committee launched an inquiry into the matter. Both the Senate and the state Assembly intends to hold hearings, beginning in August. While the government is deeply concerned about the health effects on the population, the more disturbing allegation the media and officials grapple with involves Cuomo's prior knowledge.

Cuomo and his administration allegedly knew the PFOA chemical had contaminated the water, but put off telling residents for more than a year.

Senator Kathy Marchione also faces bad press as a result of her response to the crisis. Though her district includes Hoosick Falls, she previously refused to hold hearings regarding the issue, for some months.

She only recently launched an inquiry into the matter, following intense backlash on social media. Her announcement followed the actions of another U.S. Senator, namely Kirsten Gillibrand, who held a listening session in Hoosick to learn more about the issue from residents.

Angry Residents

Residents in Hoosick continue to express outrage about the way they received information of the toxin's presence in their blood. The New York department of health mailed out the results but did not provide much in the way of support systems for residents who received the heartbreaking news. The health department, however, denies this allegation.

This has not stopped residents from posting on social media and wherever else they can make their voices heard expressing dissatisfaction and concern.

Shifting Blame

Rather than accept responsibility for the scandal, a spokesperson for Governor Cuomo passed the blame onto the EPA. In his response to a letter from the federal oversight committee, he blamed the EPA's ever-changing guidelines and a lack of proper regulation.

The administration, however, expressed a willingness to fully cooperate with other bodies during the inquiry, mostly in an attempt to clear their name. However, the shift of blame to another department rather than apologizing for the incident is likely to rub residents the wrong way, especially in light of accusations that Cuomo knew the water was contaminated.

As Governor Cuomo continues to wash his hands of the water crisis, there's no telling how the public will react and how this will affect his political career going forward. However, if Governor Snyder's scandal is anything to go by, Cuomo may as well kiss any hope of rebuilding public trust in his campaign goodbye unless he figures a way to turn things around.

Legislation Backs New York Residents Against Water Pollutants

By Tanja Rekhi

Thursday, July 21, 2016 at 11:23 PM EDT

Time Warner News – Capitol Region

Michele Baker's story is like so many in Hoosick Falls and Petersburg.

"When I was pregnant, I was drinking the water," she said. "She got it in utero, and I gave it to her all her life. Baby bottles, her cereal, the sippy cups."

So many drank the water and gave it to their children without ever knowing it was contaminated with the manmade chemical PFOA.

"Never ever in a million years did we think our water was contaminated, or our water would cause cancer or thyroid disease or a host of other diseases," Baker said.

The chemical, typically in fire fighting foam and nonstick pans, was found at Hoosick Falls' Saint-Gobain and Petersburg's Taconic Plastics, eventually making its way into countless residents' water. The two sites were designated as Superfund sites, meaning the state would make sure cleanup is happening as quickly as possible.

But residents wanted more.

"I've met so many moms and dads, and their children might be sick or they're sick, or their grandparents are sick, or they might have lost someone," Baker said.

Thursday afternoon, they got what they wanted. A bill signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo now allows residents to file a claim against the pollutant up to three years after the Superfund designation.

Senator Kathy Marchione co-sponsored the bill. As she explained, the previous law only allowed a suit to be filed within three years from the occurrence of an injury caused by exposure to a contaminant.

"If you had gotten sick five years ago, for example, you wouldn't have been able to have an action without this law," Marchione said.

"It sends a strong message: Negligence and polluters will not be tolerated in New York State, so I thank the governor for that," Baker said.
